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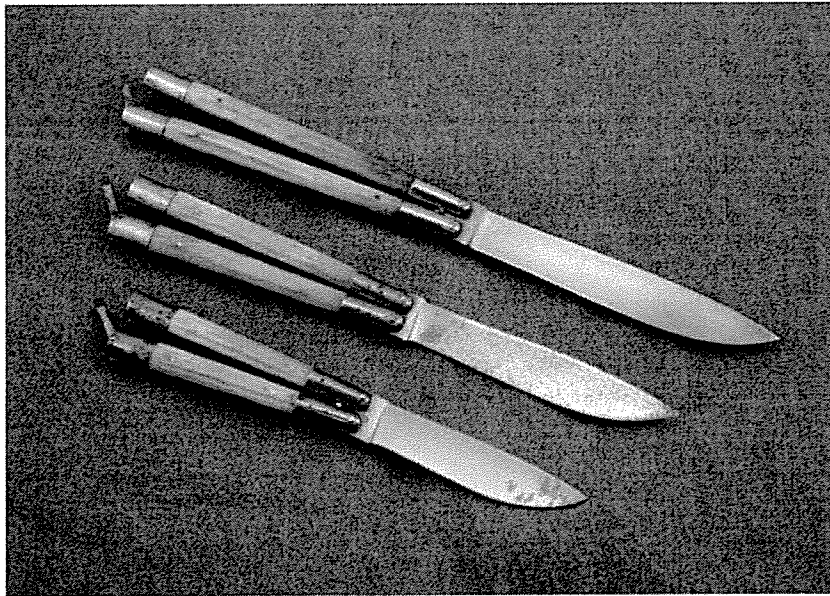
[Home](#) > [Knife History](#) > [History: The Disputed Origins of the Butterfly Knife](#)

History: The Disputed Origins of the Butterfly Knife

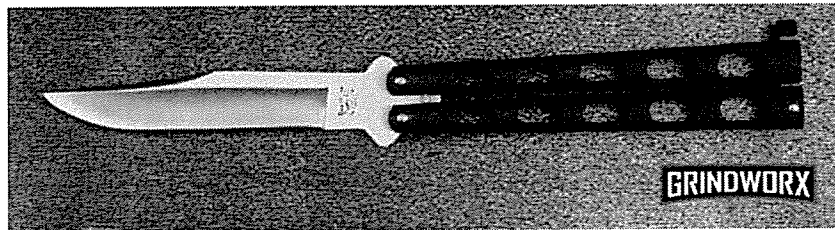
By Trevor Brown · October 22, 2018

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Authentic Filipino balisongs (Image from Balislinger on bladeforums.com)



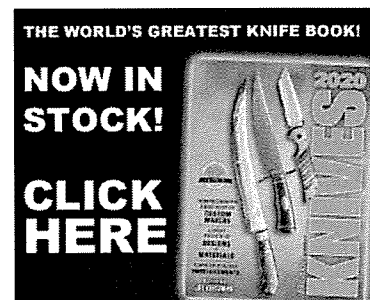
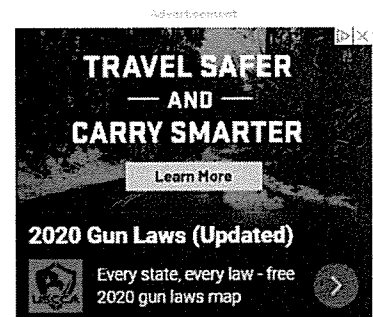
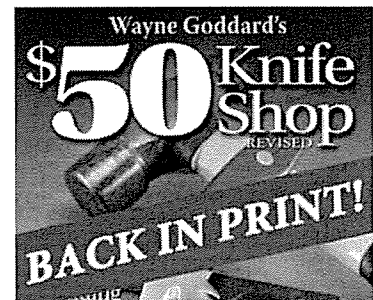
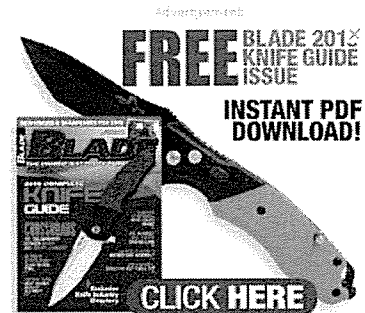
Butterfly Knife History

Butterfly knives, also known as balisongs, are one of the most popular knife styles today. They consist of a blade with two handles that rotate around a pivot and wrap around the blade in the closed position. That much is agreed upon. The origin of butterfly knives is still up for debate.

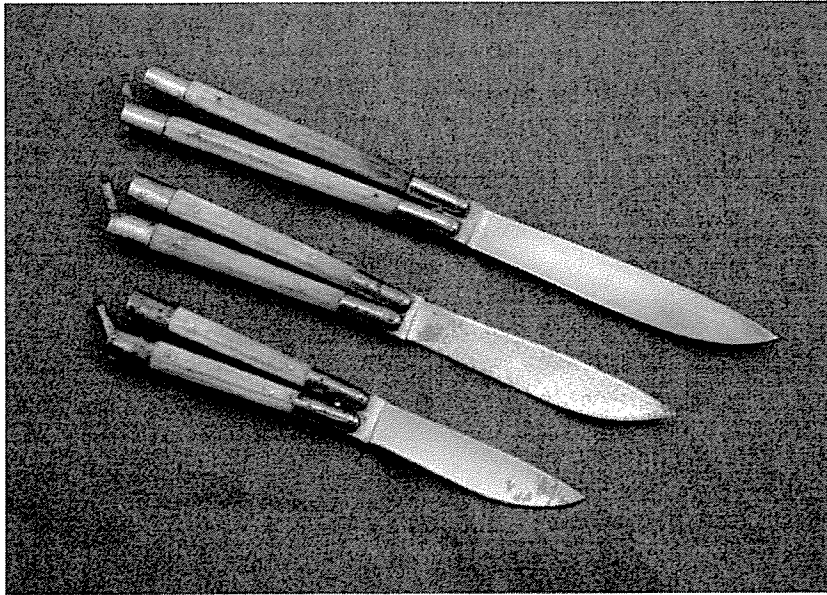
Where Were Butterfly Knives Invented?

Butterfly knives have a rich history, though much of it has been left up to speculation. Walk up to a knife enthusiast and ask, "Where did butterfly knives originate?" and you may get two very different answers.

Fuzzy historical records and well worn legends are to blame. The two main countries of

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One Version: Butterfly Knives Came from the Philippines



Authentic Filipino balisongs (Image from Balislinger on bladeforums.com)

The Philippines is often cited as the birthplace of butterfly knives, where “balisong” is a more appropriate term. Legend has it that the balisong knife has roots that go back to around 800 AD. This style of knife could be opened quickly with one hand and easily used as a weapon. It proved a common choice for self-defense and utility uses.

A rich balisong tradition has been present in the Philippines for more than a century. Countless stands and stores sell handmade butterfly knives today, and Filipino province of Batangas and the area of Balisong in Taal are known for the blades.

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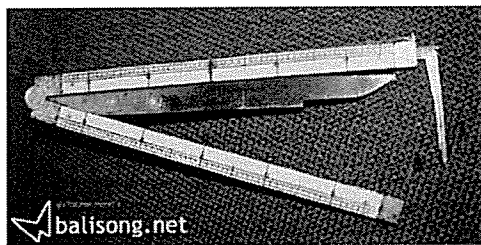
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At the very least, the word “balisong” is widely recognized to have come from there. That said, the lack of physical evidence to support a Filipino origin fuels the argument.

Another Version: Butterfly Knives Came from France



A vintage example of the Pied Du Roi. (Image from balisong.net)

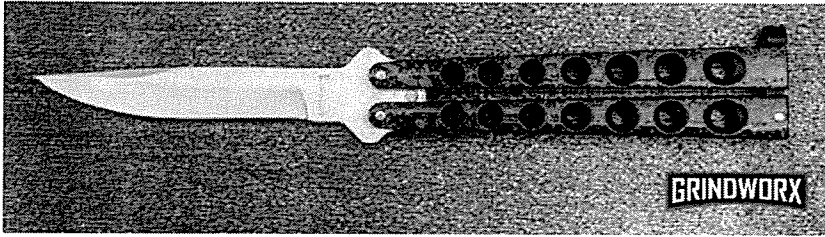
Another claim is that the butterfly knife was invented in France between 1500 and 1700. The reason for this is the “Pied Du Roi,” which means “foot of the king” and is a French measurement tool that dates to the 1700s. The “Pied Du Roi” greatly resembles a butterfly knife. This tool has been pictured with measurement handles and a blade that folds out on one end. It looks like a butterfly knife, but could it be considered the first one ever made?

Proponents of the French origin argue that Spain, allied with France at the time, adopted the butterfly knife in their tasks and eventually took it to the Philippines as sailors sailed to different countries. Sounds reasonable, but hasn’t been proven.

Another supporting argument for the French is that these knives comes from Germany and England, where some butterflies can trace back to prior to 1900. I recently came across a collector’s piece online made in Enoland with markinas datino to 1873. This rules out the

also been claimed to be influenced from similar Filipino knife models as early as 800 AD.

So Where Did Butterfly Knives Actually Come From?



Due to the popularity of balisongs in the Philippines, it isn't surprising to suspect it started there. The lore passed down from generation to generation also support this idea.

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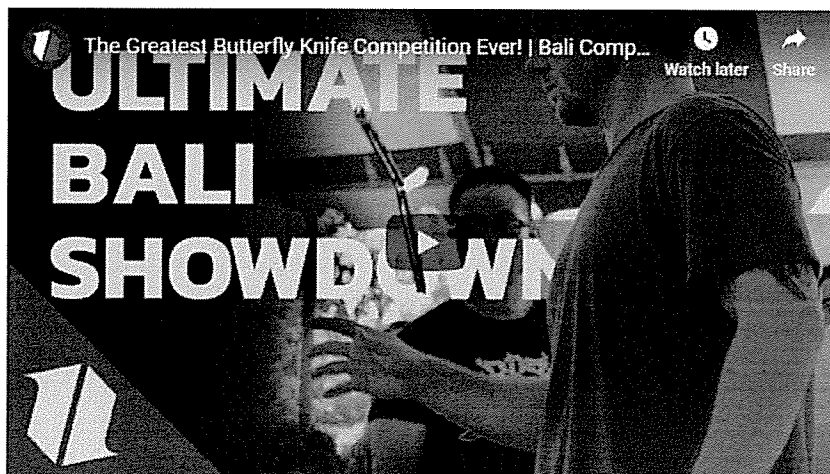
On the other hand, France has pictures and documentation of a measurement device that resembles a butterfly knife and dates back hundreds of years. However, that measurement device likely wasn't used for self-defense, flipping, or other tasks common to butterfly knives today. Could it be considered the same thing? Hard to tell.

Both sides have great arguments. More information is needed to finally determine this unsolved piece of butterfly knife history.

Butterfly Knives Today

Regardless of history, butterfly knives are rising in popularity due to the fun of "flipping." Flipping involves tossing butterfly knives open to perform all kinds of tricks. Whether it's the danger of it, the community, the collectible appeal, or anything else, there's no doubt flippers are mesmerizing to watch.

Take this Butterfly Knife Showdown from Blade Show 2018 for example.



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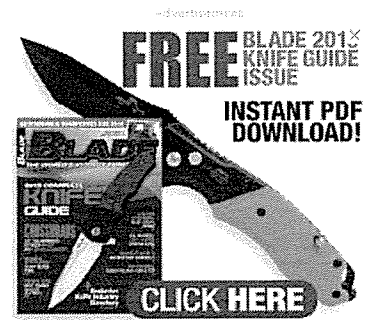
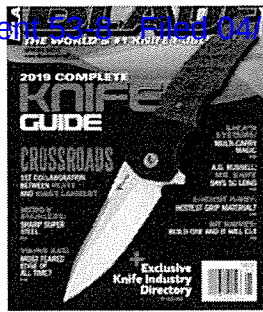
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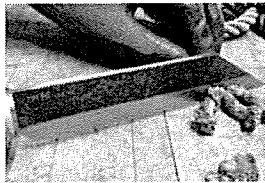
Trevor works for Blade HQ and loves all things sharp and pointy. You can find him at the gun range, on the lake or doing his best to stay out of trouble in the great outdoors.

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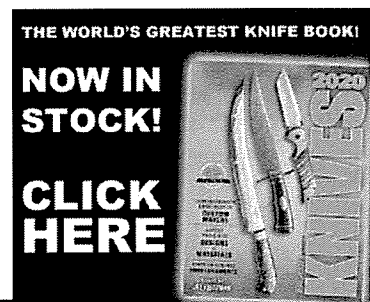
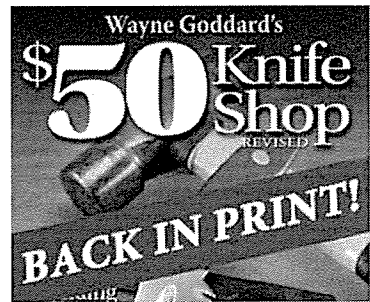
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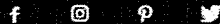
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